

Members

Rep. Charlie Brown, Chairperson
Rep. Linda Lawson
Rep. Dan Stevenson
Rep. Ralph Ayres
Rep. Daniel Dumezich
Rep. Dean Mock
Sen. Sue Landske, Vice-Chairperson
Sen. Joseph Zakas
Sen. Ron Alting
Sen. Rose Antich
Sen. William Alexa
Sen. Earline Rogers
William Pemberton
Duane W. Dedelow



NORTHWEST INDIANA TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMISSION

Legislative Services Agency
200 West Washington Street, Suite 301
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2789
Tel: (317) 233-0696 Fax: (317) 232-2554

LSA Staff:

Susan Montgomery, Attorney for the Commission
James Sperlik, Fiscal Analyst for the Commission

Authority: P.L.149-1999

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: October 25, 2001
Meeting Time: 1:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: Northwestern Indiana Regional
Planning Commission, 6100
Southport Road
Portage, Indiana
Meeting City:
Meeting Number: 4

Members Present: Rep. Charlie Brown, Chairperson; Rep. Dan Stevenson; Rep. Dean Mock; Sen. Sue Landske, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. Joseph Zakas; Sen. Rose Antich; Sen. Earline Rogers.

Members Absent: Rep. Linda Lawson; Rep. Daniel Dumezich; Sen. Ron Alting; Sen. William Alexa; William Pemberton; Duane W. Dedelow; Rep. Ralph Ayres.

Representative Charlie Brown, Chairperson of the Commission, called the meeting to order at 1:14 p.m. He explained that one topic of the day's testimony would be based on the request made in Senate Resolution 19 (authored by Senator Riegsecker during the 2001 legislative session) for a study of "the revenues and expenditures of the Indiana toll road, planned improvements to the toll road, toll road operations, and the feasibility of renewing efforts to enhance the toll road through public improvements and highway improvements in

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

the counties through which the toll road passes". Chairperson Brown also announced another topic before the Commission to be consideration of proposed legislation for the 2002 General Assembly. Chairperson Brown then read a statement from United States Senator Evan Bayh in support of a fully developed Gary/Chicago Airport. (A copy of the statement is attached as Exhibit A.)

1. Proposed Legislation for 2002 General Assembly

A discussion then followed concerning a draft of Resolution 20021591.001, authored by Senator Landske. The Commission members who were present agreed to support the draft, with the deletion of lines 13 and 14, the deletion of "wishes to encourage" in line 20 and the insertion of "encourages", the deletion of "wishes to encourage" in line 22 and the insertion of "encourages", and the deletion of lines 27 through 29. (The Commission did not have a quorum of members present for purposes of taking a formal vote on items before it.) (A copy of the Resolution is attached as Exhibit B.)

The Commission also considered and agreed to support PD 3492 (2002), concerning the membership of the Gary airport authority, authored by Senator Rogers. The Draft proposes to add two nonvoting advisory members to the airport authority, with one to be a member of the General Assembly and the other to be appointed by the Mayor of Hammond or the Mayor of East Chicago in alternate terms. Senator Rogers believes that this make-up of the authority would give broader support for the airport. (A copy of the Resolution is attached as Exhibit C.)

Paul Karas, Administrator of the Gary/Chicago Airport, supplied the Commission with Gary/Chicago Airport-Chicago's Third Airport. (A copy of the document is attached as Exhibit D.) Within the document is an explanation of the expansion and renovation plans that are a part of its funding request from the General Assembly. The Commission recognized the importance of continued funding for expansion plans at the Gary/Chicago Airport, but as it is aware of the state's current financial situation, it will consider forwarding a funding request for the airport to the General Assembly at the earliest opportunity.

The Commission also agreed to support the continuation of discussion of commuter transportation and rail service in the Lowell-Chicago and Valparaiso-Chicago corridor.

The Commission then expressed its support for the Regional Transportation Commission of Lake County, although it realized that a funding mechanism for the Regional Transportation Commission has not yet been decided.

2. Indiana Toll Road

Diana Hamilton, Chair of the Indiana Transportation Finance Authority (ITFA), Steffanie Rhinesmith, Fiscal Analyst for IFTA, Sam Wolfe, Operating Engineer for the Indiana Toll Road, and David Holtz, Division Director for the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) appeared regarding the topic of the Indiana Toll Road. Also in attendance concerning this topic were Kathy Noland, Legislative Liaison for INDOT, and Linda Wagner, Controller for the Toll Road. The Manager of the Toll Road, Mike Puro, was not in attendance as the offices of the Toll Road had been severely hit by high winds due to a nearby tornado the afternoon before this meeting. It appeared that two buildings and many vehicles of employees and of the Toll Road were destroyed.

Ms. Hamilton gave the Commission copies of Indiana Toll Road- Revenues and Expenditures. (A copy of the document is attached as Exhibit E.) She stated that the Toll Road spans 157 miles across the northern part of the state, and that it is owned by IFTA. IFTA issues bonds and pays debt service and has entered into a lease with INDOT for

management and operations. There are four ex-officio and five citizen members on the Board. In answer to questions from Senator Zakas, Ms. Hamilton stated that an inquiry as to establishing other toll roads in the state would require a feasibility study, and she was unaware if any interstate routes had been turned into toll roads. Representative Mock stated that he remembered that once the original bonds for the toll road had been paid off, the toll road was to have been turned over to the state. He believes that about 1987 more money had been borrowed to pay for improvements, and so the transfer never happened. Senator Antich stated that she had been told by Congressman Visclosky's office that I-65 could not be turned into a toll road because federal monies had been used for its construction.

Ms. Hamilton stated that IFTA raises revenue from investments, concessions and miscellaneous income, and from tolls. Senator Zakas asked whether an extra tax could be added to gasoline purchased at a toll road plaza, and then used for maintenance. Legislative Services Agency staff was asked to look into this. David Holtz stated to Chairperson Brown that the vast majority of the bridges on the toll road are in Lake and Porter Counties. In response to Representative Mock, Mr. Wolfe stated that the last toll increase was in 1985, and there are no plans presently to increase the charges. Ms. Hamilton and Ms. Rhinesmith explained the trust indenture (Page 7 of the document) and current financing structure. Currently, there is not enough reserve to transfer money into a Transportation Improvement Fund, which could be used for local (off-Toll Road) transportation projects; most bridges are reaching the end of their useful lives and need to be replaced. Representative Mock asked about the status of toll road employees; Ms. Hamilton replied that they are employees of INDOT. However, no state funds are used to pay any expenses of the toll road.

Mr. Wolfe commented that all road engineering must meet INDOT specifications and other items must meet Indiana Building Code. When an improvement is made, such as adding lanes, the project must comply with federal standards. Representative Mock asked IFTA to do a study to see if Indiana lost any federal funding for the 157 miles of toll road, in contrast with funding due if that stretch were a federal highway.

Discussion followed concerning earlier projects funded by the Transportation Improvement Fund. Chairperson Brown expressed concerns from Senator Riegsecker regarding cleanliness and upkeep of the toll plaza facilities. Ms. Hamilton stated that she had made an inspection of 7 of the 10 facilities in the summer; photos were taken of food areas, exterior, plazas and women's restrooms. She noted that installation of British Petroleum outlets has improved the quality of facilities, although differences were noted at times between north and south facilities at the same exit. She has not yet shared the results of the inspection with Senator Riegsecker. Sam Wolfe said that a 1995 project tripled the number of women's restrooms.

Representative Duane Cheney told the Commission about the noise problem in the Portage area near the toll barrier. The problem seems to arise from truckers who fail to use the compression release engine brake. His bill on this issue has passed, but now the issue is that of enforcement. Mr. Wolfe commented that some noise problems may come from tires on pavement. There are noise abatement regulations from the federal government, but those may not be applicable to the toll road because of the date it was built. Ms. Hamilton stated that there has been consideration given to moving the toll plaza to another area which may take care of some of the problem. The Indiana Motor Truck Association is aware of the concerns. Kathy Noland from INDOT told the Commission how to supply information identifying drivers thought to be offenders to the trucking company.

David Holtz of INDOT supplied an overview of pavement, bridge, and congestion concerns from information given to him by the Toll Road. (A copy of his document Indiana DOT-Toll

Road PMS, BMS, and CMS Status is attached as Exhibit F.) He stated that each year his staff reviews the condition of the entire state highway system. He believes that the toll road, as a whole, is in good condition, and that needs are foreseeable and can be met. Pavement, naturally, needs ongoing maintenance. Most bridges were built between 1955 through 1959, and as none were built after 1999, this will mean continued funding for their upkeep and rebuilding. He computed a need of about \$44,000,000 a year for necessary funding for toll road engineering expenses.

Representative Mock asked about the salaries paid to toll road managerial staff. Mr. Wolfe stated that in 1985, the General Manager of the Toll Road made about \$60,000 a year, and presently the salary is about \$120,000 a year.

Susan Montgomery from the Legislative Services Agency corrected the minutes from the September 13, 2001 meeting to reflect that member Duane Dedelow was not in attendance. She also stated that an interim report and not a final report would be prepared for the Legislative Council, as HEA 1852 (2001) does not require a final report until 2003.

There being no more business before the Commission, Chairperson Charlie Brown adjourned the meeting at 3:35 p.m.